

Teacher Text Guide and Worksheets

for

On the Waterfront

directed by

Elia Kazan



© Angie Barillaro, Radiant Heart Publishing, 2010

On the Waterfront

Introduction

Elia Kazan's film 'On the Waterfront' was released in 1954. It is based on a series of award winning articles about 'Crime on the Waterfront' - exposing the corruption in the Longshoremen Union, prevalent in the 1940s and 1950s and beyond.

The scene in the taxi with Terry and his brother Charlie is seen as one of the great cinematic moments in history, remembered by all. There is a sense of power behind that scene as most people can identify with the feelings that life should have worked out better for us or that we have failed to live up to our dreams. There is disappointment and disillusion in all of our lives.

Kazan won eight Academy Awards including Best Picture, Best Actor (Marlon Brando) Best Supporting Actress (Eve Marie Saint), Best Screen play and Best Director. It has remained a classic ever since.

About the Director - Elia Kazan

Elia Kazan was born in 1909 in Istanbul and had Greek parents. At the age of four Elia and his family moved to New York.

Appalled at the lack of equality in America, Kazan joined the American Communist Party for two years as a young man. Kazan directed both films and plays.

In 1952, during the American obsession with Communism, Kazan testified at the HUAC (House of Unamerican Activities) that he had been a communist in the past - and named eight others. This controversial action remained with him for life.



On the Waterfront

Basic Historical Content

- After World War Two, the United States began to focus on the differences between itself and the Soviet Union (Russia)
- Russia was a Communist country (since 1917)
- USA was capitalist and democratic
- Tensions began to rise in what was known as 'The Cold War'
- In 1948 all non communists were expelled from Czechoslovakia (Communist)
- Berlin Blockade 1948/1949
- Soviet Union was becoming strong
- China became Communist in 1949
- By 1950 fear of communism was rife in America
- Senator Joseph McCarthy, under the House of Un-American activities was key in spreading paranoia regarding communist infiltrators.
- He had a pattern of putting people on trial without any evidence
- People were 'blacklisted'
- To some extent in 'On the Waterfront', Terry is Elia Kazan
- After many years people realized how inappropriate 'and unfounded' the HUAC trials had been and McCarthy was discredited.

How do you think fear and paranoia spread in a community?



On the Waterfront Comprehension Questions

Scene one - On the Waterfront

1. What does the opening shot of the film suggest?
2. Discuss the impact of the music by Leonard Bernstein.
3. How do we know who the power holders are?
4. What is Terry's task?
5. Described the surrounds and living conditions.

Scene Two - Joey's Fall

1. Why was Joey killed?
2. To what extent is Terry guilty for Joey's death?
3. How do we learn the community has lived in fear for a long time?
4. What are our first impressions of Edie?
5. Why are people reluctant to co-operative with the police?

Scene Three - On the Inside

1. Who are the men in the back room of Johnny Friendly's Bar?
2. How to they relate to Terry?
3. Why is Terry not keen to take the money?
4. What is the symbolism of the rooftop and the pigeons?
5. Why is a day's work so tough?

Scene Four - The Shape-Up

1. How are the Waterfront crime investigators received by the workers?
2. What is the code of 'DnD'?
3. "If we don't borrow, we don't work". What might that mean?
4. Who is Big Mac and why is he important?

Scene Five - The Union Explained

1. Explain the corruption of the Waterfront Union.

On the Waterfront Comprehension Questions

Scene 6: Safety

1. How are men like Terry rewarded?
2. Describe the Church meeting.
3. What do the men think of Father Barry?

Scene 7: Mob Attacks

1. Why does the mob attack the Church?

Scene 8: Park

1. How are Edie and Terry different?
2. Whose side is Terry on, when Edie asks “which side are you on?”
3. How is the atmosphere of the Waterfront captured in this scene.

Scene 9: Edie and dad

1. Why does her father want Edie to go back to Saint Anne’s?

Scene 10: Rooftop

1. Who are the Gold Warriors?
2. Why is Terry looking after Joey’s pigeons?

Scene 11: Terry and Edie

1. What do we learn about Terry’s view of life as he talks with Edie?

Scene 12: Wedding

1. How does Edie realize Terry was involved in her brother’s death?

Scene 13: Threats

1. Why is Terry threatened to stay away from Edie (Joey’s brother)?

Scene 14: Death of Dugan

1. Why was Dugan killed?
2. Discuss the effect of the high angle shot of this scene.



On the Waterfront

Comprehensive Questions

Scene 15: Sermon

1. Why does Father Barry see the recent deaths as crucifixions?

Scene 16: Confession

1. Why does Terry confess his involvement?

Scene 17: Another Confession

1. What is Edie's reaction to Terry's confession?
2. How does the background noise heighten the tension in this scene?

Scene 18: Kid Brother

1. What position is Terry's brother Charlie placed in by John Friendly?

Scene 19: In the Car

1. How was Charlie let down by his kid brother?
2. What 'offer' or bribe is made to Terry if he does not testify?
3. What choice does Charles make and what will it cost him?

Scene 20: "Terry!"

1. Discuss the lady's comment when she hears Terry being called: "That's the same way they called Andy, the night I lost him."

Scene 21: Revenge

1. What is Terry's response to seeing his death brother's body?



On the Waterfront

Chapter 22: Truth

1. How does Father Barry convince Terry to testify instead of killing Johnny Friendly?

Scene 23: Trial

1. Describe the scene at the courtroom, and Terry's evidence.
2. Who is Mr. Upstairs?

Scene 24: On the rooftop

1. Why is Tommy killing pigeons?
2. On the pier, "everybody works" except Terry – discuss the tension in this scene.

Scene 25: Confrontation

1. Why are the other longshoremen against Terry?

Scene 26: Fight

1. Describe the fight between John Friendly and Terry.
2. How do we know John Friendly has lost his power over the longshoremen?

Scene 27: Walk

1. What is the importance and power of this final scene?
2. Comment on Father Barry's statement to Terry "you lost the battle, but you have a chance to win the war".

